Approved For Release 2010/09/09 : CIA-RDP90-00552R000505140005-3

ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE A-3

WASHINGTON TIMES
31 JANUARY 1983

CIA lends new twist to papal plot

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — The CIA believes Bulgarian officials knew in advance of a terrorist's plans to kill Pope John Paul II, but never thought they would be carried out, The Los Angeles Times reported yesterday.

But the CIA is convinced that neither the Bulgarians nor the Soviet Union instigated the attack on the pope in St. Peter's Square 20 months ago, the newspaper reported.

Despite the fact no absolute proof has been found, the newspaper reported CIA specialists believe that Bulgarian intelligence agents knew Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca was bent on killing the pope. But they reportedly considered him an unstable person who probably would be captured.

"The CIA conclusion makes the Bulgarians — and by extension the Soviets, who control the Bulgarians — accessories before the fact," the Times quoted an unidentified source as saying. "It dilutes their guilt, but not very much."

If the White House accepts the CIA's assessment, it could remove at least one stumbling block in the way of a summit meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Yuri Andropov. Andropov was head of the Soviet secret police and intelligence network, the KGB, at the time the pope was shot.

"Reagan could never meet Andropov if it was proved unequivocally that the Bulgarians, and therefore the Soviet KGB, was behind the plot to kill the pope," a U.S. official said.

"Even if a strategic arms agreement were negotiated, it would be politically impossible for Reagan to sit down with Andropov."

The report said the CIA has concluded the three Bulgarians who have been implicated in the shooting were intelligence agents with whom Agca was working on some unknown matter. One of the Bulgarians is now in an Italian jail, the two others have refused to return from Bulgaria for questioning by Italian authorities.

Approved For Release 2010/09/09 : CIA-RDP90-00552R000505140005-3